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National Conservation
Association (U.S.)

Statement of principles

[Washington? D.C.]

[1908?]

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The National Conservation Association

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Believing it to be of the utmost importance that the natural resources of the Nation shall be comprehensively and vigorously developed and utilized for the promotion of the public welfare, without waste, destruction or needless impairment, and subject always to their intelligent conservation and the effective preservation of the rights and interests of the future generations of our people.

And in order to secure the recognition and support of these principles by the people and by their representatives, we hereby unite in the National Conservation Association, and adopt for ourselves the following, taken directly from the Declaration unanimously adopted by the Conference of Governors, convened by the President of the United States, in the White House, at Washington, on May 13, 14 and 15, 1908.

"We do hereby declare the conviction that the great prosperity of our country rests upon the abundant resources of the land chosen by our forefathers for their homes, and where they laid the foundation of this great Nation.

"We look upon these resources as a heritage to be made use of in establishing and promoting the comfort, prosperity, and happiness of the American People, but not to be wasted, deteriorated, or needlessly destroyed.

"We agree that our country's future is involved in this: that the great natural resources supply the material basis on which our civilization must continue to depend, and on which the perpetuity of the Nation itself rests.

"We agree that this material basis is threatened with exhaustion.

"We agree that the land should be so used that erosion and soil-wash shall cease; that there should be reclamation of arid and semi-arid regions by means of irrigation, and of swamp and overflowed regions by means of drainage; that the waters should be so conserved and used as to promote navigation, to enable the arid regions to be

reclaimed by irrigation, and to develop power in the interests of the People; that the forests which regulate our rivers, support our industries, and promote the fertility and productiveness of the soil should be preserved and perpetuated; that the minerals found so abundantly beneath the surface should be so used as to prolong their utility; that the beauty, healthfulness, and habitability of our country should be preserved and increased; that the sources of national wealth exist for the benefit of the People, and that monopoly thereof should not be tolerated.

"We declare our firm conviction that this conservation of our natural resources is a subject of transcendent importance, which should engage unremittingly the attention of the Nation, the States, and the People in earnest co-operation.

"We agree that this co-operation should find expression in suitable action by the Congress and by the Legislatures of the several States.

"Let us conserve the foundations of our prosperity."

We, therefore, form this Association to advocate and support the adoption

by the people themselves and by their representatives of definite and practical measures to carry the foregoing principles into effect, and to oppose in all appropriate ways all action which is in conflict with these principles, whether such action is attempted by individual citizens or by legislative or administrative officials. Among such measures are the following:

FORESTS.

The protection of the source waters of navigable streams, through the purchase or control by the Nation of the necessary land within their drainage basins, especially in the Southern Appalachians and the White Mountains.

The enactment and enforcement, both by the Nation and by the several States, of effective laws to prevent, by active patrol during dry weather, and by other appropriate means, the spreading of fire in all forests, whether publicly or privately owned.

The reasonable but effective public regulation of timber cutting on forest land, whether publicly or privately owned, the conservation of which is essential to the public welfare.

The separation, for purposes of taxation, of the timber from the land

on which it grows, so that the forest crop shall be taxed only when it is harvested, while the land shall be taxed every year.

The support and extension of practical forestry.

WATERS.

The preparation, by a Commission appointed by the President of the United States, of a comprehensive plan for waterway improvement, extending to all the uses of the waters and the benefits to be derived from their control, including navigation, with the relation of railroads and terminals thereto, the development and disposition of water power, the irrigation of arid lands, the drainage of swamp and overflowed lands, the control of floods, the prevention of soil-wash, and the purification of streams for water supply.

The immediate undertaking and continuous prosecution of works clearly necessary under such general plan.

The incorporation into all future grants of water-power rights by State or Nation of provisions to secure the following:

(a) Prompt development, on pain of forfeiture of the grant.

(b) Payment of reasonable compensation for the benefits granted by the people, with periodic readjustment of the rate of compensation, so as to insure justice both to the investor and to the public.

(c) The limitation of all such grants to periods not exceeding fifty years, and the reservation of the right to terminate and acquire or reconvey the grant for proper cause and upon equitable compensation; together with proper inspection and publicity of records and accounts.

(d) Recognition of the right of the appropriate public authorities to make reasonable regulations as to rates of service.

The termination of all existing permits or grants for the development of water power and the substitution of new grants involving the foregoing principles as soon and to such extent as may be consistent with the terms of the existing grants.

The support and extension of the irrigation of arid lands and the drainage of swamp and overflowed lands.

LANDS.

The directing of public attention to the need for preserving the fer-

tility of our soils, and thus protecting the future food supply of our people.

The enactment of legislation whereby the title to the surface of public lands and to the minerals therein shall be granted separately, with every appropriate facility to miners to acquire such part of the surface as may be needed in the development of their claims.

The conservation and control of the unappropriated public range lands by the Government in the interests of the stockman and homemaker, and subject at all times to homestead entry.

MINERALS.

The retention by the Government of the title to all lands still in public ownership which contain phosphate rock, coal, oil, or natural gas, and the development of the same by private enterprise, under conditions that will prevent extortion and waste.

The enactment of appropriate legislation to prolong our coal supply, to reduce waste in mining, and to establish sufficient safeguards against the loss of life in mines.

We desire to further all legislation which is wisely designed to diminish

sickness, prevent accidents and premature death, and increase the comfort and joy of American life, believing that human efficiency, health and happiness are natural resources quite as important as forests, waters, lands and minerals.

The foregoing enumeration is intended to indicate the general character of some of the measures which this organization believes should be adopted to carry the principles of Conservation into practical effect. It will, however, co-operate in every appropriate way with other organizations and with the State and National officials to cover the entire field of the conservation and development of our natural resources, and to bring to this co-operation the vigorous support of an intelligent and disinterested citizenship.

**END OF
TITLE**